

Message Text

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42

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

CU-02 /063 W

----- 012881

R 121515Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6392

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, XA

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND ON POSTPONEMENT OF GABORONE CONFERENCE
OF CHURCHES

1. CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES, SUPPORTED BY SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SACC) AND THE ALL-AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (AACC), WHICH WAS TO HAVE BEEN HELD MARCH 10-17 IN GABORONE, HAS BEEN "POSTPONED" AFTER CONSIDERABLE PREPARATIONS AND PLAY IN BOTSWANA AND SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS. THEME OF CONFERENCE WAS TO HAVE BEEN "LIBERATION, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION". EMBASSY KNOWS OF NO PRESENT PLANS TO RECONVENE CONFERENCE.

2. SPECULATION HERE ON REASONS FOR POSTPONEMENT CENTERS ON DISPUTE BETWEEN SACC AND AACC, HEADED BY CANON BURGESS CARR, IN NAIROBI. ACCORDING TO SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS STORY, AT AACC ASSEMBLY IN LUSAKA IN MAY, 1974, CARR URGED THAT

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CHRISTIANS QUOTE GIVE UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT TO THE LIBERATION

MOVEMENTS UNQUOTE, THUS UPSETTING SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCHMEN.

3. FEELING HERE, ACCORDING TO LOCAL CLERGYMAN, IS THAT CARR POSTPONED MEETING BECAUSE SACC HAD CONFERENCE ORGANIZED IN ITS FAVOR WITH DOMINANT MONETARY RESOURCES AND NUMBER OF DELEGATES. AACC WANTS CONFERENCE, IF HELD, TO BE MORE BALANCED AND NOT SA PLATFORM.

4. ACCORDING TO INTERLOCUTER, SOME CHURCHMEN HERE BELIEVE THAT PERSONAL ANIMOSITY BETWEEN CARR AND JOHN REES, GENERAL SECRETARY OF SACC, WAS ALSO SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN POSTPONEMENT.

5. ANOTHER LINE OF THINKING ON POSTPONEMENT WAS MENTIONED BY UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE HERE WHO HAD HEARD THAT PERHAPS LIBERATION GROUPS HAD PUT PRESSURE ON CARR TO POSTPONE OR CANCEL IN ORDER TO AVOID ANOTHER SA-BLACK AFRICAN DIALOGUE.

6. COMMENT: FACT THAT GOB WOULD HAVE PERMITTED CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN BOTSWANA IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF ITS INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT POLITICS VIZ A VIZ SOUTH AFRICA. SA NEWSPAPER QUOTES REES AS SAYING THAT PRESIDENT KHAMA SAID HE WOULD NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF ANY CHURCH LEADER ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE, IRRESPECTIVE OF COUNTRY FROM WHICH HE CAME.

THOMSEN

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